

Hebrews 12:25-29

The Arguments for Accepting What God has Spoken

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh – v. 25

In our last study we dealt with the exhortation of v. 28 *Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*. We focused on acceptable service and we viewed it from the perspective of the two mountains that are described in the earlier verses. There's Mt. Sinai where the law was given. That historical occasion brought forth a fearful revelation of God – so fearful that it caused Moses himself to exceedingly fear and quake (v. 21). We cannot hope to serve God by scaling this mountain because the lesson of Mt. Sinai is that God is unapproachable.

And then there's Mt. Sion (v. 22). This is the mountain that we have, spiritually speaking come to. This is the mountain that brings us into the fellowship of the saints past and present and that brings us into fellowship with God himself. And the reason we can enter into such fellowship is because in coming to Mt. Sion we come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel (v. 24).

This is the mountain of grace that leads to salvation. This is the mountain that enables us to serve God acceptably. It becomes very important, then, to make sure at all times that we view our service to God from the right perspective or from the right mountain to use the emblem of the text.

In close connection with serving God acceptably with reverence and godly fear there is another exhortation given to us in v. 25. Perhaps we should have considered this one first, but regardless of the order here it stands and it's very important to our service to God. Notice what it says *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh*.

Such a statement shows us most plainly that to refuse God's word is to refuse God himself. And doesn't that say something about scholarly critics, so called, who think they find errors in the Bible. They find fault with what God says. They think they are smart enough to know better than God what's what and they undermine the gospel and endeavor to do the devil's work which has always been to cast doubts upon what God has said.

Would you notice also from the verse that reference is made historically to those that refused God's word in the past. *For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth*. The reference is to Moses who spoke for God on earth. Those that refused Moses did not escape the judgment of God. The book of Numbers certainly bears that out. How many times they complained and they plotted to go back to Egypt until at last that whole complaining generation died in the wilderness. They refused God's word and they did not escape death.

How much more the Apostle argues shall we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven (v. 25). Notice from this verse that refuse him is to turn away from him. To refuse his word is to refuse God himself and what such a refusal amounts to is a

turning away from him. And those that refuse him and so turn away from him shall not escape the everlasting consequences of such a refusal. This is the argument of these last verses in the chapter.

If I could state the matter positively it would go like this – See that you accept him that speaketh. Make sure that you accept his word and in so doing accept him that speaks the word. And in the verses that follow the arguments are given as to why we should accept his word and accept him that speaks the word.

This is what I want to focus on this morning.

The Arguments for Accepting What God Hath Spoken

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh which leads us to say that if we don't refuse him then we must accept him and accept what he has spoken. And in the remaining minutes I want to draw your attention to the arguments for such acceptance. I think and hope that you'll agree with me that the arguments presented in these closing verses of chp. 12 are compelling.

Consider with me first of all that we should accept what God has spoken:

I. Because His Word is Powerful

Notice the historical reference in v. 26 where we read *Whose voice then shook the earth.* The reference is to the effect his voice had on Mt. Sinai. We saw this in our last study. Listen again to the words of Exod. 19:18,19 *And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.*

This is why you have heard me say repeatedly that the setting for the 10 commandments is as important as the commandments themselves. You would think that in the setting of a mountain on fire that quaked greatly accompanied by the voice of the trumpet sounding long and growing louder and louder – you would think that in that setting these commandments would have been taken very seriously.

And so should they be taken seriously today. This terrifying revelation of the greatness and power of God has been preserved for us and comes to us as the revelation of God. It is such a God as shook the earth with his voice who tells us to have no other gods before him, and to honor our parents and keep the Sabbath and don't kill or steal or covet another man's goods.

Dare you refuse the One who has spoken in such fashion? Dare you take such words lightly? Dare you turn away from such an One as this who has such power? – who obviously has the ability to enforce the commandments that he gives?

But the case for refusing not the One who has spoken becomes more compelling still when you consider that he has spoken from heaven. And I take the meaning here to be the one who has not only communicated the law but has communicated the gospel. Listen to the words of Albert Barnes on this verse:

Do not turn away from him who has addressed you in the new dispensation, and called you to obey and serve him. The meaning is, that God had addressed them in the gospel as really as he had done the Hebrews on Mount Sinai, and that there was as much to be dreaded in disregarding his voice now as there was then. He does not speak, indeed, amidst lightnings, and thunders, and clouds, but he speaks by every message of mercy; by every invitation; by every tender appeal He spake by his Son, (#He 1:2;) he speaks by the Holy Spirit, and by all his calls and warnings in the gospel.

And can't we argue, we who have gained a saving interest in him that his word came to our hearts with power when he spoke the gospel to us by his Spirit? The quaking of Mt. Sinai could make men fear and tremble but the voice of him which speaks from heaven brings forth nothing short of resurrection power. *And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins* Paul writes in Eph 2:1.

And in the previous chapter Paul's prayer is that the saints at Ephesus would be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation, the eyes of their hearts being opened so that they may know, among other things, *what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*

Here are compelling reasons, then, to make sure we refuse not him that speaketh. His voice shook Mt. Sinai when he gave the law and his word came to your heart with all the power that it took to raise you from spiritual death to spiritual life. It was that power – the power of his effectual call that opened your eyes and enlightened your mind and renewed your will and overcame your rebellion and thus enabled you to respond to Jesus Christ as he was freely offered in the gospel.

Since you've known that power – make sure that you refuse not him that speaketh. It is true that following him is not easy. It was never promised that it would be easy. Quite the contrary it was promised that the believer would know trials and tribulation. So much so that we're told by Peter not to think it strange and we're told by James to count it all joy. And the reason we are able to do so is because we have come to Mt. Sion. We have come to the city of the living God. We are in the company of angels and the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven. We have come to the Judge of all because we have come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.

And would you notice that it follows these verses that describe where we have come that we're told in v. 25 that we're to *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.* We are to refuse

him not because his word has been spoken with power – power to make the earth quake, power to effect spiritual resurrection in your lives. There is yet one more argument to add to the case before we leave this point of the power of God’s word.

In analyzing these verses you could say that there’s a historical argument for making sure we accept God’s word and then there’s a present day spiritual argument for making sure we accept God’s word. There is also a prophetic argument or an eschatological argument given to us in vv. 26 and 27.

Notice the words of vv. 26, 27 *Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

God, who has spoken in the past with great power and has spoken to your hearts with great power in the gospel will speak again with the power that brings heaven and earth as we now know them to an end and will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. *Seeing then, Peter writes in 2Pet. 3:11 – Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, in which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

What manner of men ought we to be? We should certainly of the manner of men that make sure that they refuse not him that speaketh, but instead accept his word and accept his gospel and serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

This is the first argument, then, for accepting God’s word. God has spoken, and does speak, and will speak with tremendous power. Would you notice another compelling argument for accepting God’s word. We should do so:

II. Because His Kingdom is Indestructible

This prophetic statement we see in vv. 26 and 27 describes for us not only a powerful shaking to come but it also reveals to us the purpose that such a shaking will serve. Notice again what it says beginning in v. 26 *Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

There are things, according to this verse, that cannot be shaken. Those things will remain. And in the verse that follows we’re told what cannot be shaken. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (v. 28).*

We are certainly living in a day when many things are being shaken. Our status as the lone super power in the world is being shaken and it seems to be a given in the minds of many that our nation will decline and maybe even fall. The doom and gloom speeches about the declining dollar are heard every day. With mounting debt and a government that in our lifetimes has only known how to borrow and spend there seems to be a growing

anxiety that the kinds of things our government has been doing cannot continue without catastrophic consequences. And certainly in the minds of Christians we are convinced with good reason that no nation can continue down a path of sin without eventually being confronted by God's judgment.

We're hearing now of shake ups in the Middle East. Egypt is being shaken. Other Arab nations are being shaken. There's a great deal of uncertainty and consternation about what's going to happen in the Middle East in the coming days. Great Britain has been shaken. The announcement that college tuition costs were going to rise sent rioters into the streets. France has been shaken. The announcement that the retirement age of the citizens of that country was going to be raised by two years was more than they could bear and many of them took to the streets.

And there seems to be a general consensus in these days that the world is becoming increasingly unstable and unsafe. And the question that naturally arises in the minds of many is *what will the end of these things be?* In the midst of such perplexity and anxiety and fear isn't it good to know that we have been translated into a kingdom that cannot be moved.

Not everyone recognizes this. There are those like Harold Camping that announce over the radio that not only has the kingdom of heaven been moved but it has been completely defeated and men and women ought to leave their churches and meet instead in informal fellowships and Bible studies where there are no church officers and where the sacraments are not administered.

I certainly prefer God's word to the word of an apostate who has devoted himself to the fulfillment of his own misguided notions. God's kingdom cannot be moved. God's kingdom cannot be moved. There have admittedly been times in the history of redemption where such a statement has had to be affirmed by faith rather than what the carnal eye beholds.

We've been studying the life of Elijah in our prayer meetings. Elijah thought the cause was lost and he was the only one left. God had to tell him that there were yet seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal. It seemed that when the city of Jerusalem was defeated by the Babylonians in 586 BC that the kingdom of God was ended. There was nothing left of the Jewish nation in the promised land. And yet there was a remnant preserved among the exiles that would return to the land 70 years later and the kingdom of God would still advance.

If anything could convince the followers of Christ that the kingdom of God had been shaken and defeated it would have been when Christ was nailed to a cross and died and was buried in a tomb. And yet the very thing that seemed on the surface of it to put an end to Christ's kingdom in fact actually established his kingdom. His kingdom could not advance, you see, without atonement being made for our sins.

And so the kingdom that we have received is a kingdom that cannot be moved. It cannot be moved in the sense that it can be defeated. One might argue that the kingdom is moving

in the sense that it is still advancing and will advance and will triumph in the end. Nothing in this world is certain except for the kingdom of heaven which cannot be moved. This is why we're able to sing in the 46th Psalm:

God is our refuge and our strength, In straits a present aid; Therefore, although the earth remove, We will not be afraid.

Tho' hills amidst the seas be cast; Tho' waters roaring make, And troubled be; yea, though the hills By swelling seas do shake.

A river is, whose streams make glad The city of our God, The holy place, wherein the Lord Most high hath his abode.

God in the midst of her doth dwell; Nothing shall her remove: God unto her an helper will, And that right early, prove.

What a compelling argument, then, for seeing that we refuse not him that speaketh. We have found something that is stable in the midst of a world where nothing is stable. We have found something that is durable in the midst of a world that will be shaken and removed.

And because we have received this kingdom which cannot be moved, Paul is able to say – *let us have grace*. Isn't that a blessing? Let us go the throne of grace that we may gain the mercy and grace we need to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. So we see these compelling arguments for making sure that we refuse not him that speaketh. His word is powerful – His kingdom is indestructible. Would you consider finally the theological argument that is given to us in the very last verse of the chapter. We should accept God's word:

III. Because God Himself is a Consuming Fire

Note the words of v. 29 *For our God is a consuming fire.*

I call this a theological statement because it is a statement about God. We find a descriptive statement about God – He is a consuming fire.

Now at first sight this statement would seem to lend itself to the terrifying revelation of God on Mt. Sinai. That mountain was, after all, engulfed in flames. And that is a contributing scene to the notion that God is a consuming fire. But the statement becomes even more terrifying when we think of the wrath of God in time and for eternity.

As Barnes notes: *The image here is a most fearful one, and is in accordance with all the representations of God in the Bible, and with all that we see in the Divine dealings with wicked men, that punishment, as inflicted by him, is awful and overwhelming. So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on the hosts of Sennacherib; and on Jerusalem; - and so it has been in the calamities of pestilence, war, flood, and famine, with which God has visited guilty men.*

And what about the flames of hell? Those will be flames that are fueled with the omnipotence of God and they are flames, therefore, that will never be extinguished. This is

why Paul would write earlier in 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. When we think of God as a consuming fire, therefore, we do well to allow these truths concerning God's judgment and God's wrath to enter into our minds as things to be seriously contemplated so they may act as forces of restraint to keep us from refusing him that has spoken.

This is not the only aspect of God's character, however, that comes to mind through the statement of the text. When you think of God as a consuming fire I think it's proper to think of Christ hanging suspended between heaven and earth on Calvary's cross. Here is the fulfillment of all those Old Testament animal sacrifices which were all consumed with fire. There were various kinds of offerings but they all had one thing in common which was that they were burned by the flames on the altar – so much so that the coals of the altar were never to be extinguished.

Christ, however, could consume the flames. Christ, as our propitiation could appease the righteous wrath of God against our sins. When the flames of wrath, as it were, were unleashed upon him, he could continue through those flames to make intercession for his people until at last he prevailed and justice was satisfied and condemnation was fulfilled and our sins were purged away.

When you think of God as a consuming fire, therefore, you have a compelling argument for accepting him that speaketh and serving him with reverence and godly fear. You have the argument of the law and you have the argument of the gospel combined.

Dare we turn away from one, then, who has so spoken? – one who has thundered forth his law and one who invites to receive his Son to the salvation of our souls? The arguments are very compelling for accepting him that speaketh. I hope you find them compelling. God has spoken and does speak and will speak with power. His kingdom is indestructible and God himself is a consuming fire.

May we find ourselves compelled, then, to listen to what he says in his word and to listen with an attentiveness that is earnest. And as we refuse him not but listen to him instead may we find ourselves all the more compelled to seek him for grace and then to serve him with reverence and godly fear.